

Springfield, PA – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) has long noted that our nation's first responders have chosen a profession that is unique from many others, as it is truly characterized by the "dignity of danger." First responders daily put their own lives on the line to protect their neighbors and ensure that our communities are kept safe. — Today, Congressman Sestak had the honor of joining some of these first responders at the the Delaware County Police Chief's Association 78th Annual Banquet and Installation of Officers. There, Chief Daniel J. Kortan Jr. of the Lansdowne Police Department was installed as the organization's president.

After joining the Lansdowne Police Department in 1981, Chief Kortan was promoted to Sergeant in 1989 and to his present rank in 2001. He graduated from the FBI National Academy and is a nationally certified police supervisor, a police firearms instructor and a defense tactics instructor.

"Chief Kortan has set a tremendous example of public service, from his time in the Marine Corps to his longstanding commitment to the Lansdowne Police Department, which began more than 25 years ago," said Congressman Sestak "I thank Chief Kortan for his dedication to our community. He and those gathered here today epitomize the dignity of danger, and I will continue to vote for legislation that supports our nation's first responders."

Since taking office in January, the Congressman has supported a variety of efforts to increase our support for first responders, including police officers. Specifically, he supported the COPS Improvements Act of 2007, a bill that demonstrates his commitment to putting 50,000 new police officers on the beat by authorizing \$6.9 billion between fiscal 2008 and 2013 for the Community Oriented Policing Services program. The COPS Improvements Act will also provide funding for "terrorism cops" as well as add a number of new policing activities, such as those designed to reduce the distribution and abuse of illegal drugs, for which the program could award grants.

Congressman Sestak also increased funding by \$2.1 billion for terrorism prevention, including resources for first responders. The Homeland Security Appropriations Act tightens border security by adding 3,000 new Border Patrol Agents; increases aviation security by providing funding to double the amount of cargo that can be screened; enhances port security by providing \$400 million for safety grants – 90 percent over 2007 – to protect critical port facilities and infrastructure; and contains \$400 million in security grants – more than double 2007 funding – to protect critical transit infrastructure in high-threat areas and increases chemical plant security by including providing that state and local governments can set chemical safety rules that are stronger than the federal government's.

Furthermore, when the president proposed eliminating the Metropolitan Medical Response System—which provides funding for hospitals and first responder EMS services in major metropolitan areas to enhance their preparedness—Congressman Sestak pushed for increased funding for this program in the Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which provides \$50 million, \$17 million over FY 2007, for the program. The bill also provides \$50 million to continue the Interoperable Communications Grants, which is funded by the Department of Commerce to help local police, firefighters and emergency responders to talk to each other during a crisis. These two programs are essential to the Philadelphia region, which is constrained by the fact that its ambulance dispatching system does not allow city rescue crews to communicate directly with hospitals. Evacuation plans for the city are so unspecific that some agencies expected to play a critical role do not know what to do. Furthermore, its police and fire emergency radio communications systems are unreliable on the underground sections of the city subway. The lack of communications interoperability is a serious problem, and the grants under this bill can help improve the communication flow among our first responders and thusly improve emergency response. In addition, Congressman Sestak is working to provide funding to first responders in the region, including SEPTA, to ensure their communications networks are interoperable.

Similarly, the president proposed slashing Firefighter Assistance grants by 55 percent. However, the Congressman helped restore this cut – providing \$570 million, which is \$23 million above FY 2007 and \$270 million above the President's request in the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill. In addition, the President proposed eliminating the \$115 million SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) program, which helps fund hiring and training of additional firefighters. Instead, Congressman Sestak supported providing \$230 million (an increase of \$115 million).

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.